

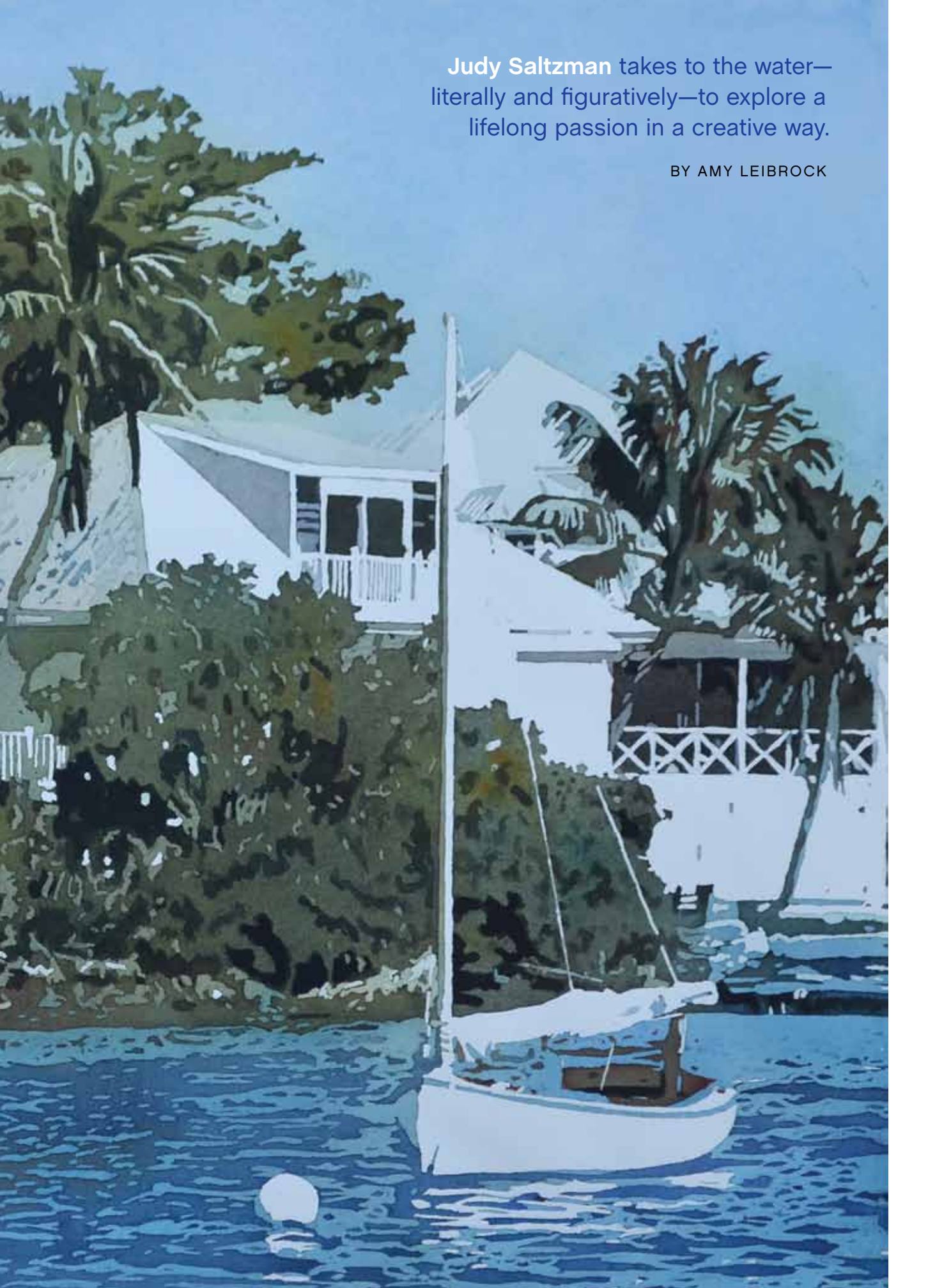
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**Sailing**

Judy Satterton



Judy Saltzman takes to the water—literally and figuratively—to explore a lifelong passion in a creative way.

BY AMY LEIBROCK







Saltzman painted **Potato Field** (watercolor on paper, 25x41) entirely with masking by adding alternate layers of warm and cool colors.

On previous pages: To keep the greens looking fresh and realistic in **Usseppa Island** (watercolor on paper, 22x30), Saltzman used layers of mixed transparent yellow and aureolin with manganese blue, cobalt blue, permanent blue and indigo.

Judy Saltzman's passion for sailing began when she was just a girl. In a lifetime spent on and near the water, she's done it all—cruising, racing, teaching youth sailing programs, hosting regattas and simply “sailing off into the wild blue yonder.” It wasn't until about 10 years ago, though, that she decided she wanted to express her passion for the sport through painting.

Watercolor seemed like a natural fit, so she began taking classes in Sarasota, Fla., where she lives. Over the past decade, she has honed her skills via classes, books, videos and experimentation to develop her lively painting style. Using shapes and layers of poured color, she builds paintings that convey depth and movement.

“I like to use the full scale of values, if I can, to give a painting more drama,” says Saltzman.

“I'm trying to capture emotions and take the viewer on a journey or behind the scenes of things about which I'm passionate.”

Although sailing was what originally inspired Saltzman to take up painting, her subject matter has expanded quickly to include food, interiors, landscapes, portraits—all painted from photos of places she's been and experiences she's had. Depending on the subject, she builds her paintings in one of two ways: When she wants highly saturated colors, she paints directly out of the tube. Otherwise, she uses a wet-into-wet approach, adding colors in layers with the help of masking fluid.

### Capturing the Action

In her sailing paintings (see *Wet and Wild*, on page 00), Saltzman wants the viewer to “feel the





wind and taste the salt,” so she puts herself into the action to capture compelling scenes. “During a regatta, I’ll follow a particular sailor around the course,” the artist says. “Something about that person has caught my eye. I’ll get right up there and snap a couple of photos at different times during the race and try to capture what it is I like. In team racing, there’s a relationship, a trust that has to be created between the captain and the crew. That’s one of the reasons I still like to paint that subject.”

Although she knows it intimately, sailing is a challenging subject to paint because it has to look realistic. “You can’t have the sails on the wrong side, you can’t have boats almost tipping over and the water absolutely flat,” Saltzman says.

### Charting the Course

Regardless of subject matter, Saltzman evaluates the reference photos she takes to choose images that feature strong value changes, harmony, interest and movement. She edits the photos on the computer, often starting with four or five images, cropping and adjusting each image’s exposure, vibrancy, color and shape. “I may decide that the whole tone of the picture is wrong,” she says. “Or, it may have been a very bright day, and I may want to tone down the saturation.”

She started photo editing using the basic Microsoft Office Picture Manager. Today, she uses Photoshop and takes most of her photos using the “raw” setting on her camera. For architectural images, she uses the program’s lens correction filter to adjust the perspective.

When painting **Living Veranda** (watercolor on paper, 30x22), Saltzman’s challenge was to paint the greens to evoke the heat of the day and ensure there were plenty of values. “Rather than paint light to dark, I started with the darkest values and then the light to medium,” she says.





Saltzman painted the background of **Wet and Wild** (watercolor on paper, 22x30) through a process of masking and adding layers wet-into-wet. She then painted the sailors directly. The photo references (above) helped her map out the painting.

Saltzman's photo editing process can take days or even weeks. To confirm there are enough value changes in an image, she converts it to grayscale. Once she's satisfied with the result, she prints out the black-and-white image and uses it to make a detailed drawing on vellum, which she then places over a grid. "It's not very scientific or difficult. I just work each box as I go along," she says.

Saltzman may not follow the photo exactly, but it provides a strong direction. As she draws, she makes critical decisions about

design, light intensity and painting method—either wet-into-wet pouring and layering or direct brush painting.

Once she works out the drawing, Saltzman uses a light box to transfer it to Arches 140-lb. cold-pressed paper.

### Building the Layers

At this point, if Saltzman is planning to use a lot of water in the painting, she'll stretch the surface and staple it onto Gator Board. Then, she'll mask out all of the white areas using Pebeo masking fluid. Once that dries, she'll begin pouring or spattering the paint onto the wet surface.

"It's a bit of yin and yang as I let the paint flow freely," she says. "I'll use basically three colors—a blue, a yellow and a red of some sort—and pour on the colors. If it's a painting of water, I may not use any red at that point, as I'm just trying to get a really light value."

As she builds layers, she moves from the



“As I peel the layers off, the painting reveals itself. To me, it’s almost magical.”

lightest to the darkest value to create subtle visual impact and overall rhythm. Because she lives in a humid area, she has to wait at least a day or so for each layer to dry. With each painting consisting of eight to 10 layers, Saltzman uses the drying time to critique her progress and work on other pieces in various stages.

She’ll evaluate if the painting needs more warm or cool colors. “Generally, the warm colors bring the objects forward and cooler tones push the objects back. If the painting is becoming too warm in one layer, I’ll use cooler colors—cobalt blue, purple, indigo or Payne’s gray—depending on the value stage,” Saltzman says.

If she’s concerned about granulation, she’ll avoid ultramarine blue. “If a layer appears too light, I’ll add paint before moving to the next layer,” she says. “If it’s too dark, it’s time for lots of water spraying to take the value down.”

When painting water, she uses these value changes to create the movement. “Marine paintings typically have a lot of blue tones and are cool in temperature, so it’s helpful to add warm tones,” she says. “I move from the lightest value to the darkest to create subtle changes, color harmony and complexity.”

When Saltzman is painting an image for which bold, vivid darks are important, and she wants more control over color, she uses a dry-brushing method using fresh paint out of the tube mixed to a consistency of milk or cream. For large shapes, she’ll use more water across the paper and mix with other colors directly. Recently, she has started combining these two methods, pouring all of the light layers first, then removing the masking and laying down the darks. You can see the results in *Wet and Wild* and *Spirit of the Nations* (at right).

### The Big Reveal

If Saltzman is in doubt about what colors to use, she refers back to color-mixing charts she’s made over the years. “Whenever I purchase a new color, the first thing I do is test the color systematically by creating a chart,” she says.



“I’ll have that paint mixed with others to determine whether it pushes paint away or pulls it in, and to observe what properties it has.”

She finds this approach particularly helpful when painting greens. “I never use a premixed green. I’ve just never found something I really like. With all of the yellows and blues out there, I find that I can come up with something that looks much more realistic.”

As the painting builds, Saltzman continues masking each layer; by the end, she doesn’t really know what she has. “As I peel the layers off, the painting reveals itself,” she says. “To me, it’s almost magical. In some cases, I have to go back and add some water and color because the masking has flattened the fibers of the paper, but they truly come alive.”

Saltzman received permission from an elder of a Native American tribe to be part of the inner circle at a powwow in Tennessee. She photographed the experience, which resulted in **Spirit of the Nations** (watercolor on paper, 41x25).



**Reminiscent**

(watercolor on paper, 29x21) is part of a series Saltzman started during the 2016 election season.

Saltzman used 10 layers of paint in **Back in Time** (middle; watercolor on paper, 30X22) for a glazed effect, mimicking the appearance of looking through a window.

**Pushing the Boundaries**

Saltzman often explores subjects through series. During the chaos of the 2016 election season, she searched for something that would feel calming to paint. What resulted was a dreamy, nostalgic series of interiors that includes *Reminiscent* and *Back in Time* (above).

She also likes creating large pieces, but watercolors aren't typically done at that scale. "When someone says, you can't do that with watercolor paper, I'm always trying to say, well, maybe we can," says Saltzman. Lately, she's worked out a compromise by doing triptychs, which in total measure up to 99 inches in width.

Another finishing method Saltzman uses is to mount her pieces on wood; she did this with *Serve It Up* and *Almost Calorie Free* (opposite).

First, she paints wood boards and sprays the paper with an archival spray. When it dries, she attaches the paper to the wood, sprays it again and then varnishes it on the wood. This method frees her up to paint much larger.

**Returning to Port**

Saltzman recently was awarded signature member status of the American Society of Marine Artists, an honor that brings her full circle. "I've taken something that I've done my entire life, and now I'm able to present it on






paper and give the viewer that experience,” the artist says.

Sailing has given Saltzman more than just exciting subject matter from which to draw. The confidence and gut-trusting instincts she learned from navigating the water has informed her painting life. “When I’d go sailing and see a dark cloud, I’d say, I wonder if that’s a storm? Should I reduce the sail? I knew from experience that if I was asking the question, the answer was ‘yes.’

“Now I do the same thing when painting. I’ll ask myself, does this painting need more dark values? Does it have enough punch? Or, is it time to stop? I trust my intuition to say, Well,

if I’m asking those questions, then those are ‘yes’ answers.” 

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AMY LEIBROCK is a Cincinnati-based freelance writer and content strategist.

Breaking with tradition, **Serve It Up** (watercolor on paper, 12x12) is mounted on a wood board instead of matted and framed, as is **Almost Calorie Free** (watercolor on paper, 20x20).